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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the inclusion of Australian rather than English cultural components into an Australian-focused curriculum. Prior to World War II, English culture was accentuated in Australian education because of the country's English heritage. The conclusion that Australia has developed its own unique culture separate from that of Great Britain, especially in the postwar epoch, justifies subordinating English studies to Australian studies in public, secondary, and postsecondary curriculums. (JAM)

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Session : How Australian is Australian Education?

# *An Australian Approach to Schooling : The Record, the Rewards and the Risks*

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This is a fairly straightforward paper. It asks two questions. One of these concerns curricular history: how much has the organized curriculum in Australia been concerned with Australia as cultural entity, as natural environment, or even as a place from which to view the rest of the world? The second question simply moves from the "is" to the "ought" : what should be our approach as educators to the issue of an Australia-focussed curriculum? In what sense, if any, is this a justifiable purpose?

When asked several months ago to provide an outline for the Conference Program I sketched a broader framework than this, hoping to address the issue of the distinctiveness of Australian education as well as discussing curricular aims and content. In what ways, I hoped to ask, is Australian education derivative and in what ways has it developed its own pattern? That topic, however, proved to be too grandiose for the amount of time I have to speak, and in any case would have been somewhat redundant after Dr. Sharpe's address earlier today. So while I will be touching upon some aspects of what makes Australian education distinctive, I shall do so within a narrower focus upon the curriculum. Thus I have chosen two pivotal questions; one on how Australian the curriculum has been; the other on how Australian it ought to be.

The folklore about our curriculum, particularly our school curriculum, is that it has been derivatively English. There is little question that this was true in the nineteenth century. Dr. Cunningham, the founding director of A.C.E.R., set out his recollections of his own schooling begun in Tasmania in the mid 1890's and continued in Victoria. Here are some extracts: [1]

> In reading the first step was to learn the alphabet - the names of the letters, not their sounds. As an extra frill, to show how thoroughly the letters were known, the alphabet was repeated backwards as well as forwards..... In the grades at school we went steadily through the Royal Readers; there was a new reader for each class, but there was nothing else. As soon as the reader had been worked through in class we all started again at the beginning of the book..... The content of the reading books had no trace of local reference. How could it have when the books were prepared and printed in the British Isles? Though in every day life the pupils spoke of a paddock all they ever read about was a field..... Christmas was the time for snow which few pupils had even seen, and so on..... We were taught geography in the primary grades from a slim volume called My First *(sic)*. Australia and New Zealand occupied a few pages at the back. The early pages were taken up with formal definitions of land forms (which) were repeated parrot fashion. The definitions were followed by a potted arrangement of information about various countries - starting of course with the British Isles - so that pupils could memorize the capes, rivers, mountains, and other physical features, the capital and major cities, and so on.
>
> The whole business of schooling was seen as a matter of packing as much information as possible into vacant and supposedly receptive minds. Whether or not the material was meaningful to the pupils remained a minor consideration.

I have quoted this passage at some length because it contains a number of issues to which we shall return. Its general tenor, which is all that concerns us for the moment, conveys three notions : that the curriculum was narrow, that the mind was seen as a passive receptacle, and that what was poured (perhaps trickled) in was British.

Those of us who are two generations younger than Dr. Cunningham, while not experiencing a curriculum as arid as this, can recognize immediately the general trend. The old Anglo-Australian's dream of a trip overseas did not arise from a desire to escape via the P. & O. Line to adventures in exotic places. Rather, it expressed an almost opposite longing: the wish to experience the Anglo-Australian dream-time, to enter a pre-existing paradise of primroses, hedgerows, nice white cottages with thatched roofs where Milly-Molly-Mandy lived, the snow mentioned by Dr.Cunningham, (and falling on real trees - not

eucalypts), the streets of legendary London, and, of course, Buckingham Palace, the centre of life on Earth. Our view of the world radiated outwards from these images. Australia, the place where we lived, was definitely at the periphery by comparison.

I

It is, however, fair to ask how much this view of the world has been assiduously cultivated by schools. Since Federation, how derivative has our school curriculum actually been? As part of the Empire and then the Commonwealth, Australia was a market for British artefacts such as Christmas cards and Monopoly boards, not to to mention steam puddings. The book trade here was entirely tied up by British agents until very recently, and thus the diet of children's books in libraries and homes was heavily biased towards Beatrix Potter and A. A. Milne. The middle class at least grew up in the midst of such paraphernalia outside the school gate. Certainly this general cultural environment invaded the schools, but perhaps its presence was weaker there than outside.

There are two pieces of evidence worth pondering. One is that primary schools at least have had a considerable struggle maintaining any content subjects (as they used to be called) at all. Here is the syllabus in three states in 1924. [2]

| | Victoria(1924) | N.S.W.(1924) | S.A. (1924) |
|---|---|---|---|
| The Three R's | 66% | 50% | 70% |
| Content Subjects | 14% | 20% | 12% |
| Special Subjects | 21% | 30% | 18% |

Most of the pupils' time was spent on the 3 R's, and most of the rest went on "special subjects", that is, Art, Music, Manual Work, and Physical Training. Before the New South Wales contingent feels comparatively smug at those figures, I hasten to point out that the 20% given over to content subjects in New South Wales was split evenly between Nature Knowledge on the one hand and Morals and Civics on the other. There wasn't just a lack of Australian history or geography: apparently there was no separate history or geography at all at this point (unlike most other states). The process curriculum movement of the 1980's is only a pale shadow of the so-called "practical" curriculum between the wars. One way we educators have consistently tried to handle the dilemma over what kind of content is appropriate for Australian children has been to teach as little content as we can.

The second piece of evidence that the school systems have had somewhat less of a cultural cringe than the rest of society is that they have been one of the few cultural producers in Australia. From the opening of the century they have been writing their own curricula and thinking about the issue of what Australian children ought to know about. There is a marked contrast here with the British-dominated capitalist cultural market outside the school grounds. Whatever might be said against centralized bureaucratized school systems (and I would want to joint in the attack), this much must be acknowledged in their defence: they did make possible home-grown curriculum development in a small country. Their monopoly was used to produce Australian oriented curricula quite early. Frank Tate, the new Director of Education, introduced Australian history into Victorian schools in 1902.[3] It was modelled on English drum and trumpet history - that is, it was about the deeds of great men. We all recognize it. My children in east coast Australian

schools each crossed the Blue Mountains three times between first grade and year 9, so they tell me. My niece and nephews in Western Australia have made the same complaint in relation to Dutch explorers. These modern day children's schooling experiences are reverberations from a turn-of-the-century search for authentic Australian heroes to stand alongside Drake, Wellington and Lord Shaftesbury and the token woman, Florence Nightingale.

Around 1900, the beginnings were laid for an Australian-focussed curriculum. The arguments put forward were a peculiar mixture of nationalism, imperialism, utilitarianism, and the New Education bound together into a bundle labelled "national efficiency". The nationalism component was related to a search for national identity in the 1890's and was given added impetus by Federation in much the same way that today's revisiting of the same theme is related to the Bicentennial. Imperialism had been given a boost by the Boer War and the unease throughout the empire at the rapid industrial expansion of Germany. Utilitarianism was and has remained a hallmark of schooling for ordinary children in Australia, and was pursued with fresh zeal at this time because of the depression of the 1890's when the word efficiency became double talk for cost cutting as it is today. Lastly, the movement towards the New Education (Herbart in Germany, Stanley Hall and Parker in America) filtered through English channels and became slogans about proceeding from the known to the unknown and correlating studies. The result, while it varied in details and exact timing from state to state (commencing with a new syllabus in W.A. in 1898) was a curriculum which began to look for national materials - biography, poetry, stories - to put into readers alongside more Imperial fare. It went further, and I

quote here an edited extract from Selleck's biography of Tate concerning the 1902 curriculum:

> ... in geography the study of maps and the learning of unrelated facts were to give way to observations and practical work based on the district in which the children lived. The new subjects, manual work, drawing and elementary science, were to become much more important. So was nature study, a particular favourite of Tate.... partly because it symbolized what the new course was attempting - a turning away from 'that conventional and bookish information' towards 'reality', and the pursuit of knowledge which had a 'close connection' with the interests of children and led to 'real power' because it could be applied to the problems of everyday life. [4]

Those who have been following the debate about Australian Studies in the 1980's may be somewhat startled to see how old these arguments are. The major point, however, is that Cunningham's cohort was the last to experience the entirely meaningless completely culturally derivative curriculum, at least in the public schools.

In order to look at the old Australian curriculum (that is, what became standard fare in the first half of this century), we shall turn now to 1932. In that year Percival Cole edited a wonderful volume which is a mine of information on what was taught in primary schools across Australia. A chapter by A.M. Lushey on Programmes of Study [5] presents not just a series of tables with subject names but also details of what readers were used and what other content was prescribed. At this point all states except Tasmania were producing their own readers and several were also producing a regular magazine distributed through the schools. History typically began in all states with great men at random but moved in Grade III to parallel strands of Australian and British history. The Australian strand started with local history and stories of bush life, moved in Grade IV to state history, in Grade V to explorers, in grade

VI to the history of other states and the story of wool, and in grade VII the two strands came together again in the history of the Empire. Geography was local in Grade I, other state in Grade II (life on farm, mill, mine, ranch, orchard), then it branched into a tripartite arrangement each year: local geography which required observation and keeping records, Australian geography physical and human, and "other lands" including mutual dependence and international trade. The geography curriculum, particularly, combined many of the best features now advocated by Australian Studies enthusiasts. Nature study began with animal and plant life of the district and included some geology. Agriculture covered local farm knowhow, orchard knowhow and dairy knowhow.

All this information and experience was overlaid with lessons on morals in some states and civics in others. Morals included cutting desks, conduct in trams, fair play, queuing, temperance, self-reliance, pride in work. Civics also included these things but went beyond safety and "bad practices" to care of public places and helping in emergencies. It reached its zenith in Grades V and VI with topics to do with democratic citizenship: how to use public libraries, how to get information from government departments, how to organize clubs and societies, local government, banking, taxation and, finally, patriotism, privileges and responsibilities.

All these topics were connected to the study of history. A general introduction to the history curriculum in Western Australia in 1936 reveals how this was done.[6] It was to be taught so that it highlighted Professor Cheney's six laws of historical phenomena. These included laws of human interdependence ("No one group," it is confidently asserted, "can continue to thrive long at the expense of the rest of the community"), the law of the

progressive growth of democracy, the law of free consent (non-coercion of minorities), and the law of social progress. The civilized, democratic societies where those who serve unselfishly and with "courage, firmness of purpose and skill" live, are not only in the right morally but history is on their side. Thus there was a confident, if ironically indoctrinatory, induction into liberal values and democratic practices.

The overall picture that comes down to us is of a curriculum which, insofar as matters of substance rather than skills were given time at all, used that time to impart regional, state and national knowledge and made use of the Empire as a window onto a wider world (to use a current cliche). There was even an Australian environmental consciousness - Arbor Day and Wattle Day were in place in their respective states from the beginning of the century and for good measure South Australia had added a Bird Day by the 1920's.[7] Whilst British history was taught alongside Australian, it was linked directly to inducting students into their inherited and living political and ethical culture. In sum, the major aim of the curriculum was practical, but it had two other linked components: to teach the morality and traditions which were believed to underpin the Australian polity, and to introduce children to their own country.

II

What has happened to the focus of the school curriculum in the second half of the twentieth century? Has it become more consciously Australian in any sense? Have we regarded introducing children systematically to their own polity and society as a major function of schooling at either level, primary or secondary?

While there has been some variation between states, I would argue that, for

some 35 years, from around 1950 until very recently, we lost our conviction that our own country should be a principal focus of schooling. That is, I believe, at least a fair inference from what has actually been taught in schools. Other purposes took precedence. The citizenship function of schooling rather quietly died away. In an address of this brevity I can do no more than suggest some hypotheses about why this happened; and I hope we shall all go away and research them - and ponder.

My major hypothesis is that in the first half of this century, introducing children to their own society was seen as a practical, functional thing to do: it fitted a particular kind of utilitarian view. Australian education has always been primarily utilitarian and practical: even academic subjects have been (and still are) studied for vocational reasons. The utilitarian perspective on schooling continued beyond 1950, but whereas beforehand educating citizens was seen as necessary, after 1950 it wasn't. The view of what was useful had changed. What might be useful to society as a whole no longer fitted what "useful" came to mean in relation to schooling. "Useful" in schooling began to have an individualistic vocational meaning only.

I would like to suggest four reasons for this. First, the fifties, sixties and early seventies were a long period of comparative economic and political security. Individualism can be allowed to flourish in such circumstances. There is no urgent need for the nation to pull together. Supporting this contention is hard evidence that our waves of nationalism have followed our recessions and depressions.

Second, the individualistic rather than communal purposes of schooling were boosted by the testing movement generally. This was the heyday of I.Q. testing and belief in inherited intelligence. Schools became obsessed with their

sifting and sorting function, and with that obsession with individual differences, the issue of what Australian children held in common or ought to learn in common became submerged.

Third, it was during the 1950's that secondary schooling began to dominate the thinking and practices of education departments. (I do not believe we have had an original thought about primary schooling in years: in this half of the century we have just muddled along with bits and pieces around the old 19th century 3Rs core.) Secondary schooling has an entirely different curricular ambiance from the primary school. This was particularly true in the '50s when comprehensive high schools had won out but universities still had their hands around the throat of the entire secondary school curriculum through junior as well as matriculation exams. The goals of university departments, which dominated each subject in the collection of secondary school offerings, were induction into their particular universal truths, not the production of good Australians in any sense. The capacity of the universities to use the curriculum to decide who would get entry into high status, lucrative professions severely affected the ability of schools and systems, in a utilitarian society, to address other curricular purposes.

Fourth, the 1950's was the heyday in academia of the positivist view, the belief that the only knowledge which mattered were facts, preferably measurable ones, and that these would generate universal laws. Truth knew no national boundaries and anything which did was therefore outside the realm of serious inquiry. These views made for an enormous overvaluing of maths and science; they produced a hierarchy of what mattered in schools which corresponded pretty much with the power of the relevant departments in universities. Freeman Butts saw it clearly on his visit to Australia in 1954.[8]

In case you have "naturalized" the hierarchy and believe it was always so, Butts' compatriots and educational colleagues who visited Australia with the New Education Fellowship in 1937 did not find it.[9] Maths/science dominance is post-war. So, even, is the "two cultures" notion. Here, for example, are some matriculation requirements of the mid-thirties:[10]

MATRICULATION REQUIREMENTS IN AUSTRALIA IN 1935

| | Arts | Engineering | Science |
|---|---|---|---|
| Queensland | English<br>Latin or Greek<br>Maths A | English<br>Maths A<br>Geography<br>Physics<br>One Language | English<br>Maths A<br>One Science<br>One Language |
| South Australia | Latin or Greek<br>Maths I | Maths I<br>Maths II<br>English<br>One Language | English<br>One Language<br>Maths I |
| Victoria | One Language | Algebra<br>Trigonometry<br>Mechanics or<br>Physics or<br>Chemistry | No<br>Prerequisites |

Source: Cole, P.R. (ed.) (1935) The Education of the Adolescent in Australia, p.112.

Positivism matters in relation to our issue - the Australian focus of schooling - because positivism worships physical science while an Australian Studies focus requires a commitment to the importance of the humanities, particularly the social sciences. There have been arguments that all curricular areas can be "Australianized" and of course this is so. But what it means in fact for maths and science is that they can be changed from a Skills and Drills focus

by being placed in historical and societal context. That simply means taking the humanities seriously within the maths and science camp as well as in their own separate curriculum areas. If schools were to take the study of Australia seriously then they had to take the social seriously as worthwhile knowledge. The cult of positivism made that extremely difficult.

The final blow to Australian studies came because the social disciplines, fighting back, seeking a place in the sun, took positivism to heart. Social inquiry in the universities pretended to be a science. Economics managed this best by model building madly and then forgetting that its constructs were only models and pretending they were real. Geography moved away from people and places and into concepts and models too. Both these moves had serious repercussions for the Australian focus of these subjects in schools. History was perhaps the least affected, though in the positivist era it distanced itself rapidly from morals and civics; retaining the same school curriculum in most states over many years it seemed to dig in rather than rethink until very recently.

Perhaps the biggest disaster in social science was the saga of Social Studies. This subject began to replace history and geography in some states in the early 1950's in primary schools and crept upwards into the lower secondary.[11] Social Studies was an idea imported from America where positivist, consensus sociology held a confident place in university life and where the view that schooling existed in large part to produce loyal Americans was 150 years old and unshakeable.

Australia had never had a consensus sociology tradition. Our first sociologists were radical conflict theorists who were rapidly moved on in the 1920's and not replaced.[12] Our nationalist education between the wars lacked altogether the patriotic fervour of the American version. Social studies,

therefore, has never properly taken root. Only in Victoria did it become an examinable subject and receive minimal status. Teachers, who by definition were trained in something else, saw it as a hodgepodge in the 50's and still saw it that way in the 60's.[13] It lacked purpose and coherence when displaced from an American context into a society embarrassed with civics and unfamiliar with Talcott Parsons. In the 70's and 80's it has tried a focus upon broad "laws" of humans and society, and/or a process approach (teaching information retrieval, map work etc.)[14] Neither of these is fruitful if what we want is a good introduction to our own particular society, Australia, and its very particular idiosyncracies.

It seems worth adding two extra hypotheses as codas because I think there were interaction effects between these and the things I have already mentioned. One is that the nationalist/imperialist practices of the first half of the century came under suspicion from the left and liberal democrats because they were rightly associated with the rise of fascism. The Nuremberg Trials emphasized a new consciousness of individual moral responsibility to humanity rather than blind loyalty. Flag raising ceremonies came and went according to the bent of the state government, but they were enacted with less and less fervour by a new generation of more thoughtful staff, and they gradually died away.

The other hypothesis is that the anti-communist hysteria of the 50's meant that a less indoctrinatory, alternative approach to the old civics - to conduct discussion rather than to preach - was open only to the teacher who was either brave or foolhardy. Butts was right in discerning that sections of Australian society did not trust teachers and certainly did not want them handling controversial issues. These prejudices, which, of course, were also tied to the 'facts' view of knowledge, made good teaching in the social sciences almost

impossible, for values are a basic element of the social realm and most important events in it and theories about it therefore provoke dispute.

In summary, the view of what was justifiable schooling fell into the embrace of an individualist ethic and a positivist epistemology. I do not mean to imply that these things were not there before. My point is rather that they had not previously been as fully developed and, in addition, had been balanced by other communal purposes. Indeed, I have spoken in somewhat exaggerated terms in this second section to draw attention to what I believe was a real change in the tone of schooling. While this change was more marked and more rapid in some parts of Australia than in others - civics battled on in Queensland, for example - I would argue that it was generally true of the school curriculum in Australia. This change in tone perhaps inadvertently encouraged some biases against an Australian perspective. By and large, however, it didn't. It was simply a positivist and practical curriculum in which a triumvirate -- the universal principle, the mathematical/scientific, and the vocationally useful -- reigned.

## III

The major purpose of drawing these two pictures is to help us focus upon decisions we are being urged on many sides to make by a new wave of fervour about Australian studies. So let us now address the values issue, - whether we ought to refocus education in Australia upon Australian purposes. What do we think the legitimate goals of education are? Should an introduction to one's own polity, society (and possibly natural ecology) be objectives for all students?

Part of the difficulty and the danger in addressing the issue of Australianizing the curriculum is that it is a phrase which conjures up many different meanings for different people. These differences are not trivial. Australian Studies could be put to many purposes from the extremely radical to the appallingly Fascist. It is not a matter of innocent Wattle Days or even of somewhat less innocent Akubra hats. Possibly, it will resemble rather more the problem of how to handle the seemingly beautiful blue ringed octopus. My basic advice is therefore to approach the whole matter with extreme caution.

Perhaps a good place to start is paragraph 4.5 of the Blackburn Report on Victoria, a Report which threw down the gauntlet on this issue in 1985, two years before the Commonwealth's Australian Studies in Tertiary Education project really got wound up on the subject. I quote here a somewhat carefully edited extract from that paragraph:[15]

> Any discussion of curriculum must begin by asserting the primacy of essentially common and cultural purposes. In present circumstances, high levels of anxiety about individual employment prospects are leading to the ascendency of narrowly instrumental views about schooling and to a preoccupation with skills at the expense of content. Young people are culturally deprived if they emerge from twelve years of schooling without even the most rudimentary knowledge of the history, and forms and philosophical underpinnings of their own society.... Views about the content of the curriculum, desired common and optional studies and the spread of studies all should pursue, relate not only to individual differences in capacities and interest. They also concern those elements of the culture that are considered important to share....

The ambiguity which is buried in the notion of Australian studies is evident right in the middle of this paragraph. It begins by talking about common purposes but makes its argument by resorting to an individualist ethic about what it is young people have a right to know. While I have no problems with the latter, I find myself most uncomfortable with the former. It

is no longer the 1930s. Can a society have common and cultural purposes for schooling and, if so, which ones are justifiable? Quite clearly this is at the heart of the debate over Australian Studies.

The arguments for Australian Studies have included the following. The headings are mine, but the individual items are largely not. They are culled from articles in the Committee to Review Australian Studies in Tertiary Education's Bulletin[16] and from the C.D.C. series Curriculum Development in Australian Schools.[17] I list them from the most innocent to the most questionable.

We begin with those arguments which come straight from the heart of the liberal democratic view of education. They concern the right to know.

1. Australian Awareness

Young people have a right to understand their own society. They have a right to a sense of its history, its current institutions, its major debates, in short its economy, polity and culture. This position was put well in the Canadian Report on Canadian Studies To Know Ourselves.[18] As members of a liberal polity we have a right to know "who we are; where we are in time and space; where we have been; where we are going; what we possess; what our responsibilities are to ourselves and to others." And it was another Canadian, the writer Margaret Atwood who wrote:[19]

> The tendency in Canada, at least in high school and university teaching, has been to emphasise the personal and the universal but to skip the national or the cultural. This is like trying to teach human anatomy by looking only at the head and the feet.

This was the major point which the Blackburn Report paragraph on children being culturally deprived was putting forward.

One can have no quarrel with this view. But it is only right to warn that teaching awareness is much more difficult than it sounds. We can no longer be naive enough to believe that there is only one answer to the questions about who we are, where we have been and so on. Traditional answers have placed some people, ideas and institutions at the centre and excluded others. Yet there should be a running conversation, (some would say, a struggle) in our society on these issues and education should initiate the young into it.

2. Australian focus and outlook

There is a concern that because many intellectual disciplines in Australia have failed to acknowledge their location and have borrowed models and ideas from overseas, they have, perhaps unwittingly, engaged in major distortions of the truth. The positivist search for universals has not acknowledged that academic writers always stand somewhere. This is particularly true of those who write in humanities, social sciences, or professional areas. It is in this context that a cultural cringe is a dangerous thing and the tendency of universities to hire overseas academics with only a British or American knowledge base is most to be questioned. Windows onto Worlds,[20] the report of the Committee to Review Australian Studies in Tertiary Education, claims amongst other things that agriculture in Australia has been taught using models which are not valid for Australian ecology, soils and climate; that law schools do not focus enough on our own sets of precedents; that economic theory is taken holus bolus from texts which have buried within them assumptions which are in the interests of the major powers rather than

addressing our own particular patterns of production and problems of size; and that in international relations we see the world from a European perspective rather than from the realities of our own South East Asian geographic location. Clearly, in so far as these charges are true, they reveal plain stupidity and a desire to take part in the world academic conversation at the expense of facing reality. I do not have any problems with the argument that the sorts of texts we use in schools and universities, and the sorts of questions we ask, should, amongst other things, acknowledge our cultural and geographic location. Obviously that is a shift of focus which is all to the good educationally.

3. Active rather than passive Learning

There is another argument for Australian Studies which is particularly seductive to those of us who are professionals in education and who, since Tate in 1902, have been trying to get rid of the passive-absorption-of-facts approach in classrooms. Focussing on our own culture, it is argued, is the only way to move on from passive to active learning.

This topic deserves a whole paper in itself. The argument in the CRASTE Bulletin uses an out-of-date Deweyan model, arguing that if learning is to be meaningful it must begin with the familiar and move to the unfamiliar.[21] I do not accept this. Indeed Bruner would probably counter that to understand Australia one must be introduced to at least one other contrasting culture so that one has a point of comparison from which to stand and look.

Yet the general hypothesis looks very persuasive both within cognitivist schema theory and sociological action - reflection models. The new Australian Studies units which have been provisionally accredited for post-compulsory

schooling in Victoria use reflection on personal and family history, interviewing, site-visits, group investigations, journal keeping, and a public presentation of an original project, to ensure active learning.[22] It is the most exciting curricular develoment in Australia for many years.

There are two strands to the notion of active rather than passive learners. One is that it is crucial for children to understand that knowledge is created. The more knowledge is taught as a collection of examinable facts, and particularly as facts in texts which simply arrived from across the ocean, the less are children able to reach the revelation that all knowledge is not natural but cultural. I think it is significant that most Australian children remember books by their titles and not by their authors. Books come from shops, rather than being written by real people. I regard it as serious that the fantasies of American television seem more of an important reality to many of them than their own lives. Australian children have a right to feel part of a living society and culture, and to see that their experiences are connected to that culture. These understandings are necessary if they are to come to the realisation that their own writings and thoughts are real and serious activities.

The second strand follows from this. Children also have a right to see not just that knowledge is created but that society itself is created (and that knowledge is a changing map to it). To see society as made by human decisions is to understand the basic fact of human agency and to face one's responsibility to be involved in societal processes. The aim of those who argue for Australian Studies under this heading is to develop that powerful knowledge which enables an active approach not just to knowledge creation but to all aspects of life.

4. Australian Loyalty

This is the last category and it is the one about which I am most uneasy. I will list aims from the CRASTE Bulletins and the C.D.C. publication which I regard as related to this heading: first, that we aim to specify and increase an Australian cultural identity; second, that we aim directly to produce "better citizens"; third, that we aim directly to turn Australian children into "better contributors to Australian society", and "more effective producers"; lastly, that we aim to make people more culturally confident.

Now I have no problems with these aims as by-products of the other three general interpretations of Australian Studies we have looked at. These things may well happen if children are made more aware of their own country, if they learn to look realistically from an Australian perspective, and if they develop an active rather than a passive approach to knowledge and living. However, I want to argue, in the final few paragraphs of this paper, that to aim for any of these things directly is fundamentally anti-educational.

They are anti-educational because they aim quite simply to treat children as means and not as ends. The general idea is that children should be shaped up to fit some group's view of the national interest. Aims of this kind tend to be by-products of our economic circumstances: their advocacy follows downturns in the business cycle. Many who advocate them are not seeking to produce active creators of a future Australia, but passive acceptors of a present order.

The essence of a liberal democracy is that a nation is no more than the sum of the individual persons who live in it. A democratic society does not acknowledge a mystical national entity to which ordinary people must subordinate themselves. Some educators, for example Brian Crittenden at the recent Philosophy, Education and Society Conference,[23] suggest a certain

amount of nationalist indoctrination in primary schooling but argue for a more liberal approach to education in upper-secondary schools and universities. This is also the old Peters and Hirst view. I strongly disagree and see this as a dangerous concession to those with the power to mould our view of our country. It is a left-over of an erroneous old view of the mind as (initially at least) a passive receptacle: only those who reach the higher stages of learning have exercised their faculties enough to earn the right to be trusted to think. The reconciliation between communal and individual interests in a liberal democracy comes about, not by giving children a shot of nationalism in schools, but through a conviction that the best interests of the whole are served by attending equally and justly to the best interests of each member.

It is our job as educators to ensure that the part of children's best interests which is our responsibility - their right to know and to understand and to be prepared for adult life in our society - that this part is properly done and protected from subversion by outside interests. In so far as an Australianized curriculum is reconcilable with this and indeed helps with it we should welcome it. I have just argued that in a number of ways it may be indispensable. However it is also very clear the an Australian curriculum can easily move in directions that are the antithesis of a commitment to the right to know and to be empowered to act. This is just not acceptable to any who have a commitment either to children or to a truly democratic polity.

We live in dangerous times for schools and universities, at least for public ones. We are at exactly that post-recession point where a bout of nationalist fervour could be mighty useful for a government, and I have argued that usefulness is the dominant value in our polity. (If the nationalism became

universities too.) While we might no longer fall for the old organic metaphor of our country as a body of people with a king at the head, we may be naive enough to fall for an organic metaphor in which that obfuscatory concept "the economy" takes his majesty's place. We are certainly being put under considerable coercive pressure to do so. This sort of pressure puts in doubt our chances of keeping any new Australianized curriculum within educationally justifiable aims.

On the whole, I would want to argue that the Australian curriculum before World War II was educationally defensible: it was concerned primarily with what future citizens had a right, and a need, to know. In large part its defensibility was a by-product of being part of an empire: there was a separation between the citizenship knowledge needed for living here and the loyalty feelings which were supposed to attach to a king over there. The unexamined loyalty part was extra-Australian -- to an Empire. This was a matter of good luck rather than well thought through educational ethics and we may not be so lucky a second time. There are excellent reasons for introducing Australian studies now, picking up that lucky tradition and extending it in even more educationally justifiable ways. Those who have the responsibility to make decisions about moving in that direction need to think through right at the start how they plan to finesse the dangers.

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